

The Effect of Stereotypically Thin Female Images on Black Women's Acceptance of Abusive  
Behavior in Romantic Relationships

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## Abstract

Stereotypical images of women promoting the thinness ideal have been previously linked to the development of lower self-esteem and body satisfaction; however, there has been relatively little research analyzing whether these images have an impact on women's body dissatisfaction and women's acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships. The present study examined whether stereotypical images of women that promote the thinness ideal affect body dissatisfaction and the acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships in African American women in college. Participants consisted of female students attending Spelman College. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two levels of the independent variable female image type, thin or average. Participants viewed thirteen female images and then completed three surveys that assessed their body dissatisfaction and acceptance of abusive behaviors. Women's body dissatisfaction was measured using the PASTAS and the Thompson and Gary Contour Drawing Scale. Women's acceptance of abusive behaviors was measured using an adaptation of the IPV Compendium C3 Index of Psychological Abuse Survey. The hypotheses that women exposed to stereotypical images of thin women will exhibit higher body dissatisfaction and have a greater acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships compared to women exposed to images of average-sized women was not supported,  $t(38) = -.037$ ,  $p = .76$ ,  $t(38) = .00$ ,  $p = 1.0$ ,  $t(38) = 1.637$ ,  $p = .11$ . It appears women in the African-American community may not respond to exposure to thin images the same as women of other races.

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### The Effect of Stereotypically Thin Female Images on Black Women's Acceptance of Abusive Behavior in Romantic Relationships

Women often experience the need to fit certain standards and roles in regards to being the ideal woman. This notion is based on their perception of what creates the perfect partner for their spouse. These roles are often exhibited through media that portray women to look a certain way. One prevalent stigma in today's media that has an effect on women is the notion of thinness (Markey, 2006). The concept of thinness associates women who have a thin, or smaller-than-average, body size as possessing a form a beauty. Thus, beautiful women are often stereotypically portrayed as being thin and slender.

Previous research has examined how women feel the need to try to achieve the thin body size that is portrayed as physically attractive through the use of media images promoting the thinness ideal (West, 1995). The images that are found in the media can often lead to a decline in women's self-esteem and an increase in body dissatisfaction (Bergstrom, Neighbors, & Lewis, 2004). The decrease in women's self-esteem and the increase in body dissatisfaction have been linked to the development of perfectionism, eating disorders, extreme dieting, and depression (Cooley & Toray, 2001). Lower levels of self-esteem and body satisfaction can eventually have a negative impact on women's lives in many areas, including their romantic relationships.

Existing literature also has revealed lower self-esteem levels can lead to women's involvement in domestically violent and abusive romantic relationships (Coley & Beckett, 1988). While images promoting the thin ideal have been linked to the development of lower self-esteem and body satisfaction there has been relatively little research analyzing whether these images have an impact on body dissatisfaction and women's acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships. Since these stereotypical images of women are so prevalent in today's media and have such an impact on how women feel about themselves and view their bodies it



would be beneficial to study whether there is a relationship between these images and the acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships.

### **Stereotypical Images Promoting the Thinness Ideal**

Stereotypical images of women in today's media are a major source of how women perceive beauty. Women's ideal beauty is displayed in various aspects of the media. Women often try to achieve the thinness ideal that media portrays as physically attractive in today's society (West, 1995; Weeden & Sabini, 2005). As seen in Wiseman, Mosimann, and Ahrens (1992), attractive images that represent beauty in the media have steadily become thinner. The study used data from *Playboy* magazines, Miss America contestants, and diet and exercise articles for women to analyze body size and weight trends of female models over the years. Results found that body weight and hip size had decreased over the years in Miss America contestants and models in *Playboy* magazines. Results also found a significant increase in diet and exercise articles in monthly women's magazines.

Many of the ideal body sizes depicted in these magazines were actually in what scientists and physicians would consider unhealthy ranges. This may be associated with the increase in female eating disorders as women strive to become as thin as the models pictured in media advertisements. Overall, this study found models had become less curvaceous and more tubular over the time span of eighty-three years (Wiseman, Gray, Mossiman, & Ahrens, 1992).

More recently, Speck, Gray, and Ahrens (2003) also supported the notion that images of women in the media are becoming thinner and smaller in size in beauty and fashion magazines. This study compared the models on the covers of four popular fashion magazines - Glamour, Cosmopolitan, Vogue, and Mademoiselle - over a span of forty years. Results indicated that the body size of cover models had significantly declined over the forty-year span in three of the four

magazines analyzed. Results also depicted a significant increase in the frequency of full body shots of the cover models in comparison to partial and/or close up shots of the cover models in previous years. This suggests societal changes had begun to place a greater stress and importance on body size compared to overall facial beauty as in prior years.

The notion of model's body images becoming more tubular and less curvaceous was also seen in research conducted by Morris, Cooper, and Cooper (1989). Data in this study were collected from modeling agencies in London over a span of eight years. Results indicated that over the eight years there had been a steady increase in models height. There had also been an increasing bust, waist, hip, height ratio that revealed a less curvaceous figure over the time span. As with previous research, this also suggests the increase in thinner less curvaceous models in the media over the years could have had influence on rising rates of dieting and eating disorders over the years. Concerns have risen that women viewing these magazines are becoming more dissatisfied with their own bodies which can lead to dieting, disordered eating, the development negative body image and a decline in self-esteem. This was seen in a study conducted by Myers and Biocca (1992) where women exposed to commercials that presented the thinness ideal had a higher change in personal body shape perception an increase in depression compared to those women who viewed neutral image commercials and were not exposed to commercials that presented the thinness ideal.

Overall, previous research has displayed how today's media is bombarded with images of women promoting the thinness ideal. The notion of being thin has become a prevalent and common association with what is beautiful, as it is displayed in many women's fashion magazines. Thus, previous research supports the notion that images of women becoming less curvaceous in magazines has ultimately lead to the development of many personal and emotional

issues women in society experience on a daily basis such as lower self-esteem and greater body dissatisfaction (Wiseman, Gray, Mossiman, & Ahrens, 1992).

### **Stereotypical Images Promoting The Thin Ideal Effect on Body Dissatisfaction**

The stereotypical images of thinness that bombard women through the media in today's society can have a major impact on women's body dissatisfaction. Women often create perceptions of which they believe men find attractive based off of the notions of thinness displayed in the media (Bergstrom, Neighbors, & Lewis, 2004). Normative misperceptions have played a role in the way women perceive that men view their bodies. Women often believe men find thinness attractive when in actuality men prefer women who are not extremely thin. Women desire their ideal body size to be smaller than men actually prefer. The study by Bergstrom and colleagues (2004), also revealed that women who had false perceptions of men's desire for thinness had higher body dissatisfaction levels than women who did not have false perceptions. Based on these results it appears women desire to be thin in order to be what they believe the opposite sex finds attractive.

The impact of stereotypical images promoting thinness on body dissatisfaction brings up even greater concern as they have been linked to the development of extreme dieting and eating disorders. Cooley and Toray (2001) investigated the influence of body image and personality as possible risk variables for disordered eating and dieting behaviors. Individuals who have high standards about their appearance often have negative body image. Results indicated individuals who suffer from body dissatisfaction often strive for thinness. Personality traits such as self-esteem, self-concept and perfectionism were linked to disordered eating. In particular, women with high levels of body dissatisfaction were more likely to have negative eating habits, such as extreme dieting, compared to women with low levels of body dissatisfaction. Overall,

stereotypical images promoting the thinness ideal have been seen as having a negative impact on women's overall health and quality of life.

### **Body Dissatisfaction Variation Among Race**

While women of all races can suffer from the effects of stereotypical images on body dissatisfaction previous research has provided evidence of racial differences in type of body dissatisfaction among Black and White women. Overstreet, Quinn, and Agocha (2010) examined body dissatisfaction in White and Black women and found that while both preferred an hourglass body shape they differed on the size of specific body features that created that shape. Results indicated that White women preferred a smaller buttock and a thinner overall shape while Black women preferred a larger buttocks and larger overall shape. Similarly, research conducted by Frisby (2004) revealed Black culture did not place as great of an importance of dieting and the thin ideal on Black women compared to Caucasian women.

Although research has suggested that there is some variation in the desired body shape of women depending on race it has been observed that women of all races desire to fulfill the thinness ideal that is instilled in women in today's media. This was supported by research conducted by Dawson-Andoh et al. (2011) that specifically looked at African-American beauty ideals in Black fashion magazines. This study examined African-American women in JET magazines from 1953-2006 and analyzed the featured models body size over the years. It was hypothesized that African-American women would have had a greater acceptance of curvaceousness and less focus on the thinness ideal. However, to their surprise while the model's bodies were more curvaceous than models in Caucasian magazines there was a decline in women's overall body size as the years progressed. This displayed that that both African-

American and Caucasian magazines have become more concerned with the thinness ideal over the years (Dawson-Andoh et al., 2011).

Women indeed may feel pressure from media to conform and transform their bodies to mimic stereotypical images of women that promote thinness. These images often make women view thinness as a measure of beauty and attractiveness and can cause an increase in body dissatisfaction. Women will often take extreme and dangerous measures such as dieting, extreme exercise, and disorder eating habits to try and achieve their ideal body (Cooley & Toray, 2001). Previous research has discovered images promoting the ideal of thinness as having a negative relationship with body dissatisfaction. Furthermore; body dissatisfaction may be related to the development of other negative emotions, thoughts and behaviors in women regardless of race (Fredrickson et al., 1998). These negative emotions due to body dissatisfaction and lowered self-esteem can lead even lead to the development of negative relationships, including the involvement in abusive relationships (Coley, 1988).

### **Domestic Violence and Abusive Behaviors**

Along with the possible development of eating disorders and extreme dieting from increased body dissatisfaction, stereotypical images promoting thinness may have an effect on the acceptance of domestic violence and other abusive behaviors in romantic relationships. Abusive romantic relationships involve an intimate affair between two people characterized by wrong or improper action and treatment, including verbal, physical, and/or sexual actions (Coley, 1988). The impact of stereotypical images of thinness and the acceptance of domestic violence and abusive behavior has not been a common area of research. However, there has been prevalent research on abuse in romantic relationships.



Over one third of women have experienced a form of physical relationship abuse (Neufeld, McNamara, & Ertl, 1999). This abuse often begins as psychological abuse that eventually leads to physical abuse. In many cases, the psychological abuse a woman experiences can have a stronger negative effect on women's long-term recovery compared to the immediate impact that physical abuse creates. However, many women fail to report both psychological and physical abuse they encounter out of fear. While representation of domestic abuse and abusive behaviors may not commonly exist in magazines and advertisements it is prevalent in media forms such as in movies. Abusive behaviors in romantic relationships have been depicted in a wide range of film, from classical film such as *Othello* (1965), which was based on the Shakespeare play from 1500s, to children's film such as *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), which was based off of a 1700's fairy tale. Unfortunately, media frequently displays domestic violence in relationships showing the female as blaming herself for the abuse (Lenahan, 2009). This can lead women viewing these movies to believe that it is their role to be submissive and accept abuse from their romantic partners.

While there has not been a vast amount of research conducted to assess the relationship between stereotypical thin images and domestic violence and other abusive behaviors there has been research to view the effect of stereotypical images of Black women on intimate partner violence (IPV) (Gillum, 2002). Gillum's (2002) study developed and used the *Perceptions of African American Women's Scale* and the *Justification of Violence Scales* to analyze if the stereotypical black images of the Sapphire and the Jezebel had an effect on domestic violence justification in black women. The Sapphire image is known to portray an aggressive African-American woman while the Jezebel image is known to portray an extremely seductive and promiscuous African-American woman.

Results suggested that the majority of black men did accept the stereotypical images of black women. Men who had not been in committed relationships were more likely to accept the Jezebel stereotypical image compared to men who had been in a committed relationship. Results also indicated a positive relationship between stereotypical image acceptance and justification of domestic violence against women. The Jezebel image had a stronger relationship with justified domestic violence than the Sapphire image. With research supporting stereotypical images of black women influencing the justification of abusive behaviors in black men, it leads to the question of whether stereotypical images of thin women have a similar impact in women's acceptance of abusive behaviors.

More specifically the previous example brings into question the impact in black women's acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships, as it only assessed black men's acceptance and justification of abusive behaviors. As seen in the examples discussed above black women tend to have a different outlook and response to images that are frequently presented in the media in comparison to other races of women in today's society (Gillum, 2002). Further research can be beneficial in determining if these stereotypical images have an impact of women's acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships.

### **The Present Study**

Previous research has indicated a correlation between exposure to stereotypical images of women promoting thinness, negative self-esteem, and body satisfaction in women (Morris & Cooper, 1989; West, 1995; Bergstrom, Neighbors, & Lewis, 2004). There has also been research that has supported a link between viewing stereotypical images of black women and black men's acceptance and justification of domestic violence (Lenahan, 2009; Gillum, 2002). The purpose of the current study is to see whether stereotypical images of women that promote the thinness ideal

affect body dissatisfaction and the acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships in African American women currently enrolled in college.

While images promoting the thin ideal have been linked to the development of lower self-esteem and body satisfaction there has been relatively little research analyzing whether these images have an impact on body dissatisfaction and women's acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships. Since these stereotypical images of women are so prevalent in today's media and have such an impact on how women feel about themselves and how they view their bodies it could be beneficial to determine whether there is a relationship between these images and the acceptance of abusive behaviors and tendencies in romantic relationships.

There were three hypotheses proposed for the present study. It was hypothesized that women exposed to stereotypical images of thin women would exhibit higher body dissatisfaction compared to women exposed to images of average-sized women. Secondly, it was hypothesized that women exposed to images of thin women would have a greater acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships compared to women exposed to average-sized images. Finally, it was hypothesized that women exposed to images of thin women compared to images of average-sized women would have higher body dissatisfaction, and higher body dissatisfaction would be related to greater acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships. This study examined if stereotypical images promoting thinness negatively impacted black women's body dissatisfaction and acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships.

## **Method and Data Analysis**

### **Participants**

The sample consisted of forty-two female students who currently attended Spelman College. The majority of the participants were of African-American descent as Spelman College is a historically-black college. A power analysis using GPower 3.1 was used to determine the sample size using a moderate effect size of .5. The sample consisted of participants eighteen years or older ranging in classifications from first-year students to seniors. Participants also came from a variety of majors. All participants received food and beverage refreshments, which included their choice of chip assortment, fruit snack, cookie, and juice. Participants were also entered into a drawing to receive a seventy-five dollar Visa gift card. Any participant who failed to complete the study was not penalized with regard to receiving compensation.

### **Materials/Measures**

Materials included a series of images of women collected from the Internet that consist of thin women and average-sized women. A Google search was conducted to retrieve the images of women who fell into each category and then were later pretested to assure their validity. In general, the "thin-sized images" consisted of women who were fairly tall and slender with little body fat and muscle. This body type resembled those of high fashion runway models. Average sized images consisted of women who were average height with more curvaceous body types including some body fat and muscle. Both "thin-sized" and "average-sized" images were all of African-American women from the neck down to control for race, age, and facial feature bias.

A pretest of the images was conducted with fifteen Spelman College women to ensure the images reliability and validity. The pretest assessed each image on the following criteria: race/ethnicity, skin tone, weight, clothing trendiness, and clothing sexiness. In order to be used in

the experiment it was determined that at least seventy percent of participants must have viewed the image as an African-American woman. Also, seventy percent of participants must have viewed the image as being either thin or average size depending on the image's intended category. A series of frequency distributions were run analyzing the variables of race and weight with the seventy percent threshold to determine which images were appropriate (Table 1 & Table 2). Three different surveys (described below) were available to assess participants' body dissatisfaction and their acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships.

### Apparatus

Two Dell laptop computers equipped with Medialab software were used to conduct the experiment. Participants were able to view all images and respond to each survey on the laptop computers.

### Dependent Measures

*Body Dissatisfaction.* Each participant's body dissatisfaction was first assessed using the Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale (PASTAS; Reed et al, 1991). The 16-item scale assessed participants' weight satisfaction using a rating system evaluating participants' anxiety level on certain parts of their body ranging on a scale from 0 (Not at All) to 4 (Exceptionally So). An overall PASTAS score was calculated by averaging all 16 items. Higher scores indicated a stronger dissatisfaction of body weight and size. Previous research determined PASTAS had strong internal consistency test-retest reliabilities (Reed et al., 1991) Individuals' body dissatisfaction was also assessed using the Thompson and Gray Contour Drawing Scale (1995). The assessment consisted of nine adult female body figures ranging from very thin to obese body types. Participants were asked to indicate the figure that best represents their current body shape and the figure that best represents their desired body shape and size. The range



between participants current body shape figure and their desired body shape figure was used to determine participant's body dissatisfaction level. Larger ranges indicated greater body dissatisfaction. Previous research had a test-retest reliability of 0.79 for this measure (Thompson and Gray, 1995)

*Acceptance of Abusive Behaviors.* Participants' acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships was assessed using an adaptation of the IPV Compendium C3 Index of Psychological Abuse survey (Thompson et al, 2006). The purpose of this adaptation was to allow for a less controversial survey compared to the original IPV Compendium C3 Index of Psychological Abuse survey as it reduced participant's possibility of experiencing emotional distress. Emotional distress was reduced by not directly asking them about past relationship abuse. A seven-point Likert-scale was used to assess participant's acceptance of abusive actions with responses ranging from 1 (Very Unacceptable) to 7 (Very Acceptable). Higher scores indicated a stronger acceptance of abusive behaviors.

### **Procedure**

Participants were randomly assigned by a random number generator to one of the two levels of the independent variable female body size image. The two levels of female body size image include thin or average. There were twenty- one participants exposed to each level. Participants were told that they were participating in two separate studies. Participants were told that the objective of the first study is to see how images of women's clothing in the media affect women in society. Participants were told the objective of the second study is to observe and examine women's attitudes. Each participant first observed thirteen images of whichever condition they have been randomly assigned on the computer – images of thin-sized or average-sized women. Each image was displayed for approximately four seconds on the computer screen.

Participants then completed a series of questions regarding the clothing styles in the various images they had just observed. Participants then moved to a second computer to complete what they believed was the second study on attitudes. They completed three surveys on the second computer. The first and second surveys (PASTAS and Thompson and Gray Contour Drawing Scale) assessed the participant's body dissatisfaction. Participants were told the first two surveys are assessing their ideal body shape. The third survey, the adaptation of the IPV Compendium C3. Index of Psychological Abuse, assessed the participant's level of acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships. Lastly, participants were asked a series of demographic questions including age, classification, and race/ ethnicity on the computer. The experiment lasted approximately fifteen to twenty minutes per participant. Upon completion, each participant was debriefed and told the actual purpose of the study, which was to see the effect, that stereotypical images of women that promote thinness had on body dissatisfaction and the acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships in African-American women.

### **Data Analysis**

The study was conducted as an experiment using a between-subjects design. The independent variable of stereotypical images of women had two levels including thin female images and averaged sized images. The average sized images served as the control group and the thin sized images served as the experimental group for the analysis. The dependent variable in the experiment consisted of women's acceptance of abusive behavior in romantic relationships. The Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale and the adaption of the IPV Compendium C3 Index of Psychological Abuse measures consisted of quantitative variables. Both surveys were scored by finding an average of all the questions in order to achieve an overall single score for each survey. The Thompson and Gray Contour Drawing Scale was

scored by creating a single body dissatisfaction score based on the difference between the participant's current body ranking and her ideal body ranking. Two, two-tailed t-tests were used to analyze the data. The first t-test analyzed body size effect on body dissatisfaction. The second t-test analyzed the effect of body size on acceptance of abusive behaviors.

In the design body dissatisfaction is considered a mediator variable. A mediator is a variable that accounts for the relationship between two other variables. If the two previously described t-tests are significant, a test of mediation will be conducted. This process consists of running a series of regression analysis based on Hayes PROCESS (2012) guidelines. One indirect effect of stereotypical images on acceptance of abusive behaviors will be run to analyze the mediation effect of body dissatisfaction using the Bootstrap Method. The bootstrap method will create individual regression analysis for the relationship between each of the three variables by using a resampling strategy. The first regression will analyze the independent variable of stereotypical images and the mediation of body dissatisfaction. The second regression will analyze the mediation of body dissatisfaction and the dependent variable of acceptance of abusive behaviors. Finally, the third regression will analyze the independent variable of stereotypical images and the dependent variable of acceptance of abusive behaviors (Hayes, 2012). The indirect effect of stereotypical images on acceptance of abusive behaviors will be calculated by multiplying the effect of stereotypical images and body dissatisfaction by the effect of body dissatisfaction by the acceptance of abusive behaviors. If significant this analysis will show that body dissatisfaction mediates the relationship between body size and acceptance of abusive behaviors.

## Results

To analyze both the effect of body size on body dissatisfaction and the effect of body size on acceptance of abusive behaviors two two-tailed independent t-test were conducted. The sample included forty-two female participants currently enrolled at Spelman College; however only forty of the participant's data was used in the analysis. Two participants data, one from each level of the condition, was removed prior to analysis due to incompleteness. Participants exposed to average-sized images ( $M = 1.83$ ) had greater body dissatisfaction than those exposed to thin-sized images ( $M = 1.78$ ; see Figure 1). Participants exposed to thin-sized images ( $M = 1.05$ ) and average-sized images ( $M = 1.05$ ; see Figure 2) had similar body dissatisfaction. Participants exposed to thin-sized images ( $M=1.38$ ) had greater acceptance of abusive behaviors compared to those participants who were exposed to average-sized images ( $M=1.19$ ; see Figure 3), however this difference was not significant. The results indicate that body size exposure based on PASTAS was not statistically significant on body dissatisfaction at the .05 level  $t(38) = -.037$ ,  $p = .76$ . Also, results indicated that body size exposure based on the Thompson and Gray Contour Drawing Scale was not statistically significant on body dissatisfaction  $t(38) = .00$ ,  $p = 1.0$ . Finally, the results indicated that body size exposure based on the IPV Compendium C3 Index of Psychological Abuse was not statistically significant on acceptance of abusive behaviors  $t(38) = 1.637$ ,  $p = .11$ .

Contrary to what was hypothesized women exposed to stereotypical images of thin women did not exhibit higher body dissatisfaction compared to women exposed to images of average-sized women. Secondly, women exposed to images of thin women did not have significantly greater acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships compared to women exposed to average-sized images. However, results indicated there was a trend as women

exposed to thin images had slightly greater acceptance of abusive behaviors compared to those exposed to average sized images. Exploratory analysis was conducted to assess the trend of exposure to thin images and greater acceptance of abusive behaviors compared to exposure to averaged-sized women images. The IPV Survey items were divided into five subscales based on certain criteria including (physically abusive, verbally abusive, sexually abusive, abuse involving family/friends, and abusive involving ridicule). A series of t-test were conducted. Results found that ridicule items, such as “your partner ridicules or criticizes you in public”, were statistically significant in having higher levels of acceptance of abusive behaviors with exposure to thin images,  $t(38) = 2.21, p = .03$ . Physical abuse,  $t(38) = 1.43, p = .16$ , verbal abuse,  $t(38) = 1.43, p = .16$ , and sexual abuse,  $t(38) = 1.62, p = .12$  were found to be trending. Lastly, abuse involving family/friends was not statistically significant,  $t(38) = .81, p = .42$ . Finally, since the results were not significant, the mediation of body dissatisfaction was not conducted. Therefore, the hypothesis of women exposed to images of thin women compared to images of average-sized women having higher body dissatisfaction, and higher body dissatisfaction being related to greater acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships was not tested or supported.

### Discussion

Exposure to thin body images did not significantly impact women’s body dissatisfaction or acceptance of abusive behaviors. Women exposed to thin female images compared to average female images did not exhibit greater body dissatisfaction. Women exposed to thin female images compared to average female images did not have statistically greater acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships. However, while not significant exposure to thin female images compared to average sized images impact on acceptance of abusive behaviors appeared to be trending. Finally, exposure to thin images compared to average female images did



not have greater body dissatisfaction, which was not related to greater acceptance of abusive behaviors.

Based on the findings it appears that exposure to thin images may have a greater impact on acceptance of certain types of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships compared to body dissatisfaction. Since results appeared to have a trend between exposure to thin images and greater acceptance of abusive behaviors, it is possible that exposure to thin images may have an impact on acceptance of abusive behaviors overtime due to increased subconscious exposure. More specifically, long-term or more frequent exposure to thin images may have a more significant impact on women's body dissatisfaction and acceptance of abusive behaviors in romantic relationships.

While the results of body-size image on body dissatisfaction and acceptance of abusive behaviors were not found statistically significant and cannot be generalized for the entire population. Various limitations may have had an impact on the results. First, sample size may have had an impact on the results, as it was fairly small compared to what was initially determined by the G.Power analysis. Also, limitations include the possible development of demand characteristics, which could have altered the participant's responses to what they believed was the intended purpose of the study. For example, a participant may have chosen their responses based on their belief that exposure to certain clothing styles was suppose to generate higher body dissatisfaction. Finally, participant's actual personal body size may have made an impact on how they responded to the exposure of the various images and the images intended body sizes. For example, those who perceive themselves as average weight may have viewed the images intended to be average as being either thin or large depending on their own personal views of weight and body size.

Future studies could improve by attempting to control and correct the limitations.

Primarily, future researchers may be able to receive significant results by using a larger sample size. Also, future studies may be able to control for participants bias by creating a more elaborate cover story. With a different cover story participants may be less likely to make the connection between the independent variable, exposure of body-size images, and the dependent variable of acceptance of abusive behaviors. Such demand characteristics may lead to different responses and thus different results. Demand characteristics may have also played a role in regards to the participant's major of study. Those participants who were psychology majors may have had insight on the use of deception prior to being debriefed. This may have allowed these participants to make a connection between the images and the dependent variable of acceptance of abusive behaviors due to demand characteristics. This could possibly be controlled in future research by either not allowing psychology majors to participate in the study or by including a major demographic question to allow for equal representation from various majors.

Finally, participant's personal body size and shape may have also influenced the results. Participants who were smaller in size may not have necessary had the same reaction to the images as participant's who were average or larger in body size. Future research could possibly try to control for participant's body size by separating them into different groups based on body size and making sure an equal amount of each participant body size was exposed to each level of the condition.

The influence of stereotypically thin images of women that are frequently displayed in the media can make a lasting impact on those who observe them. According to previous research exposure to thin images can make women more dissatisfied with their own bodies, which can lead to negative lifestyle habits (Cooley & Toray, 2001). It is not yet clear whether length or

frequency of exposure to thin images creates a difference in the level of body dissatisfaction and acceptance of abusive behaviors in women. However, based on this study it may be possible that images of thin women do not have the same impact on women of the African-American community as it would of women of other races. This may be due to the majority of African-American women's ideal body type to be more curvaceous compared to the slender body type that is found in stereotypically thin female images in the media.

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## Appendix A

## Physical Appearance State and Trait Anxiety Scale

The statements listed below are used to describe how anxious, tense, or nervous you feel *Right Now* about your body. Use the following scale:

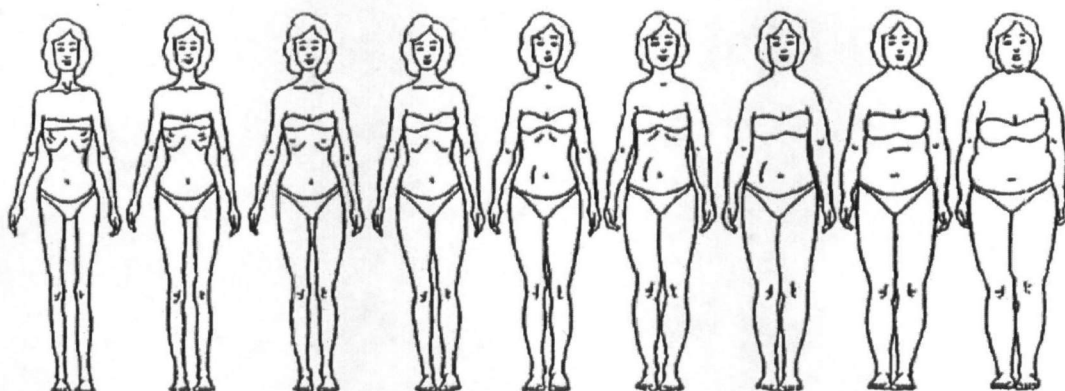
Not at All	Slightly	Moderately	Very Much So	Exceptionally So
0	1	2	3	4

Right now, I feel anxious, tense, or nervous about:

1. The extent to which I look overweight.
2. My thighs.
3. My buttocks.
4. My hips.
5. My stomach (abdomen).
6. My legs.
7. My waist.
8. My muscle tone.
9. My ears.
10. My lips.
11. My wrists.
12. My hands.
13. My forehead.
14. My neck.
15. My chin.
16. My feet.

Appendix B

Thompson and Gray Contour Drawing Scale



\*

Which drawing do you most closely resemble?

\* Which drawing would you like to look like?

## Appendix C

## IPV C3. Index of Psychological Abuse Adaptation Survey

Please indicate how accepting you are of the behaviors listed below committed by your partner in a romantic relationship.

Please circle the answer that best describes your acceptance level.

Actions	How acceptable is this behavior				
	Unacceptable	Somewhat Unacceptable	Neutral	Somewhat Acceptable	Acceptable
1. Your partner refuses to talk to you	1	2	3	4	5
2. Your partner accuses you of having or wanting other sexual or romantic relationship(s)	1	2	3	4	5
3. Your partner tells you about other sexual or romantic relationships he or she is wanting or having in order to hurt you	1	2	3	4	5
4. Your partner refuses to do things with you that you want to	1	2	3	4	5
5. Your partner forbids you to go out with him or her	1	2	3	4	5
6. Your partner tries to control your money	1	2	3	4	5
7. Your partner tries to control your activities	1	2	3	4	5
8. Your partner withholds approval, appreciation or affection as	1	2	3	4	5

## punishment

9. Your partner lies to you or deliberately misleads you	1	2	3	4	5
10. Your partner makes contradictory demands or requests of you	1	2	3	4	5
11. Your partner calls you names	1	2	3	4	5
12. Your partner tries to humiliate you	1	2	3	4	5
13. Your partner ignores or makes light of your anger	1	2	3	4	5
14. Your partner ignores or makes light of your other feelings	1	2	3	4	5
15. Your partner ridicules or criticizes you in public	1	2	3	4	5
16. Your partner ridicules or insults you most valued beliefs	1	2	3	4	5
17. Your partner ridicules or insults your religion, race, heritage, or class	1	2	3	4	5
18. Your partner ridicules or insults women as a group	1	2	3	4	5
19. Your partner criticizes your strengths, or those parts of yourself which you are or once were proud of	1	2	3	4	5



20. Your partner criticizes your intelligence	1	2	3	4	5
21. Your partner criticizes your physical appearance and/or sexual attractiveness	1	2	3	4	5
22. Your partner criticizes your family or friends to you	1	2	3	4	5
23. Your partner harasses your family or friends in some way	1	2	3	4	5
24. Your partner discourages your contact with family and friends	1	2	3	4	5
25. Your partner threatens to hurt your family or friends	1	2	3	4	5
26. Your partner breaks or destroys something important to you	1	2	3	4	5
27. Your partner abuses or threatens to abuse pets to hurt you	1	2	3	4	5
28. Your partner punishes or deprives the children when he/she is angry at you	1	2	3	4	5
29. Your partner threatens to take the children if you leave him or her	1	2	3	4	5
30. Your partner leaves you somewhere with	1	2	3	4	5

no way to get  
home

31. Your partner  
threatens to end  
the relationship if  
you didn't do what  
he or she wanted

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

32. Your partner  
tries to force you  
to leave your home

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

33. Your partner  
threatens to  
commit suicide  
when he or she is  
angry at you

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Table 1

*Picture Race Frequencies*

Picture	<i>f</i>	%
2b	13	92.9
2e	12	85.7
2i	10	71.4
3a	12	85.7
3b	14	100
3c	12	85.7
3d	14	100
3e	14	100
3f	14	100
3g	14	100
3h	14	100
3i	14	100
3j	14	100
5f	12	80
5h	11	73.3
5i	12	80
6a	13	92.9
6b	11	78.6
6c	10	71.4
6e	14	100
6f	14	100
6g	13	92.9
6h	13	92.9
6i	14	100
6j	12	85.7
6k	14	100

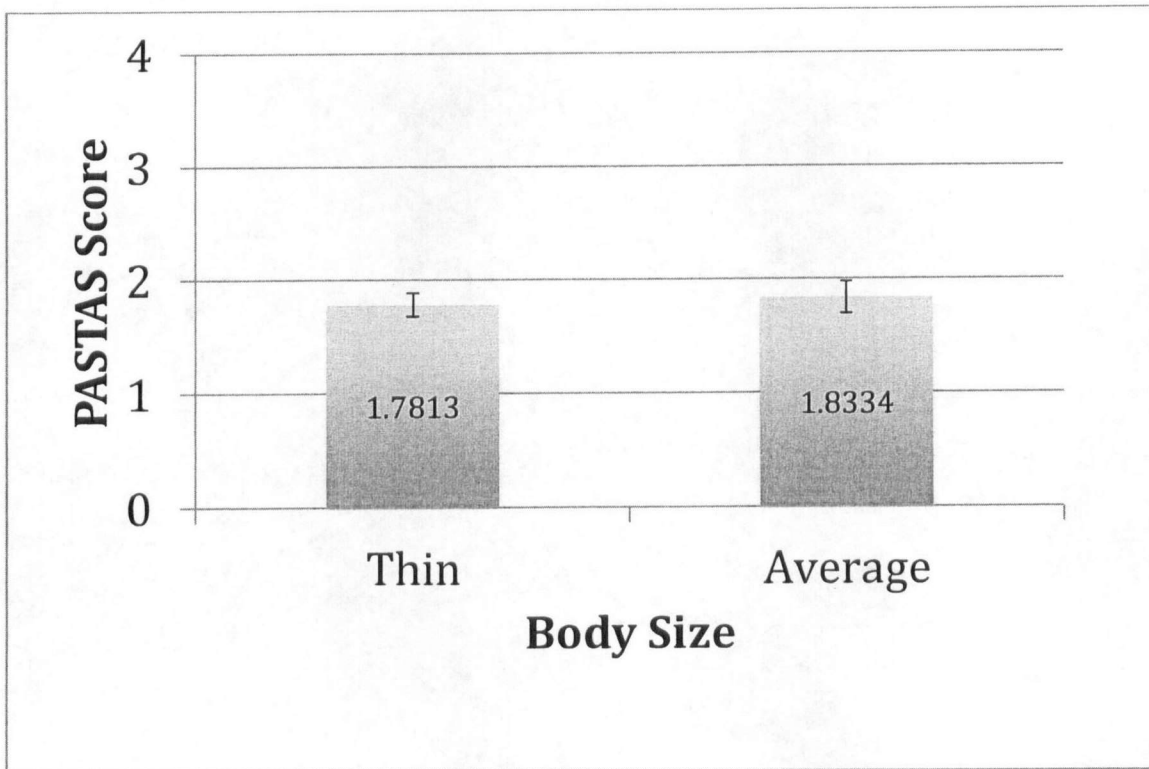
*Note.* Displays pictures selected after pretest based on meeting the 70% threshold requirement.

Table 2

*Picture Weight Frequencies*

Picture	<i>f</i>	%
2b	13	92.9
2e	12	85.7
2i	13	92.9
3a	11	78.6
3b	10	71.4
3c	13	92.9
3d	11	78.6
3e	14	100
3f	13	92.9
3g	11	78.6
3h	14	100
3i	13	92.9
3j	13	92.9
5f	11	73.3
5h	12	80
5i	13	86.7
6a	10	71.4
6b	11	78.6
6c	12	85.7
6e	13	92.9
6f	12	85.7
6g	12	85.7
6h	11	78.6
6i	13	92.9
6j	12	85.7
6k	11	78.6

*Note.* Displays pictures selected after pretest based on meeting the 70% threshold requirement.



*Figure 1.* Mean difference between PASTAS score based on body size exposure. No significant difference was found between women's PASTAS scores exposed thin female images compared to average female images,  $t(38) = -.037$ ,  $p = .76$ . Standard error bars are represented in the figure by the error bars attached to each column.



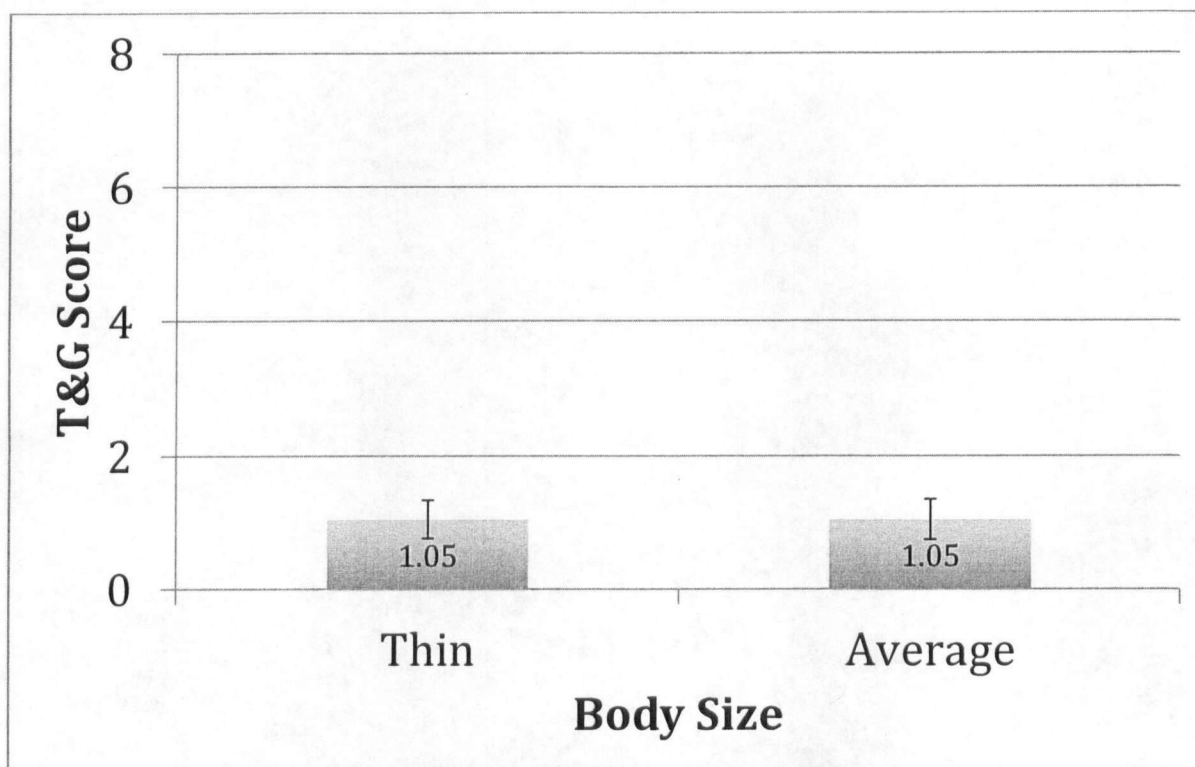


Figure 2. Mean difference between Thompson and Gray Contour Drawing Scale score based on body size exposure. No significant difference was found between women's Thompson and Gray scores exposed thin female images compared to average female images,  $t(38) = .00$ ,  $p = 1.0$ . Standard error bars are represented in the figure by the error bars attached to each column.

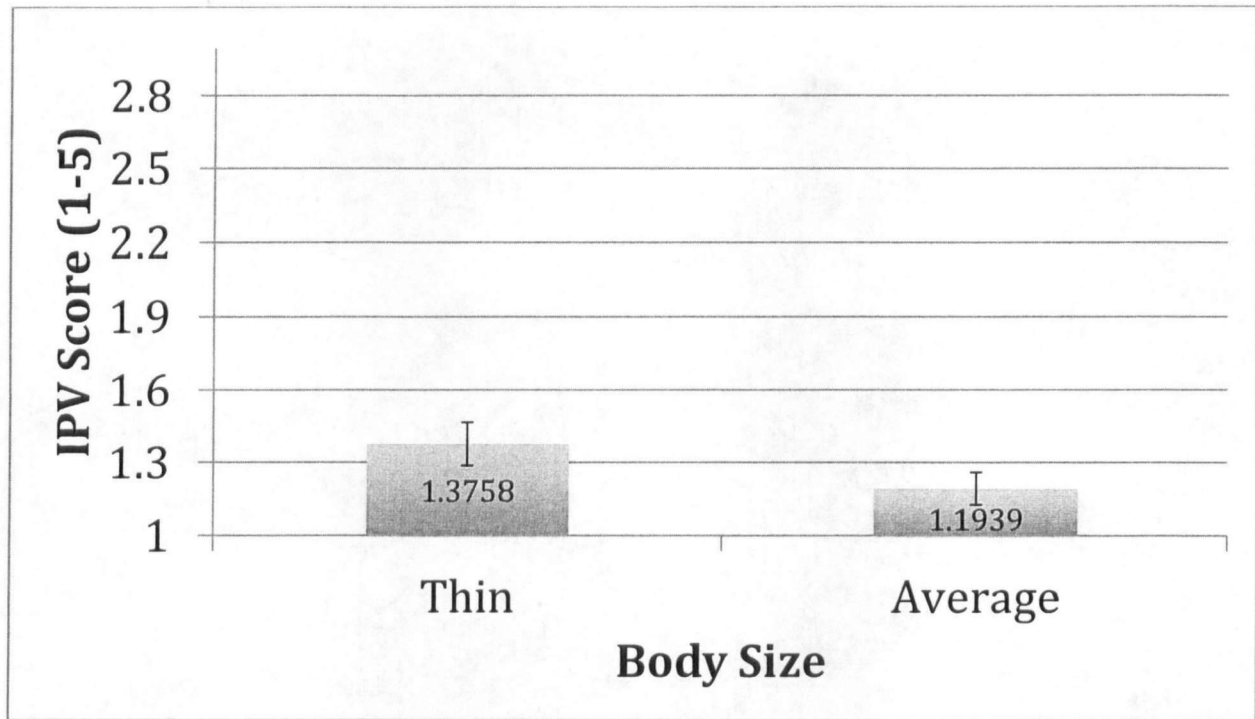


Figure 3. Mean difference between IPV Adaptation Scale score based on body size exposure. No significant difference was found between women's IPV Adaptation Scale scores exposed thin female images compared to average female images; however, there is a trend,  $t(38) = 1.637$ ,  $p = .11$ . Standard error bars are represented in the figure by the error bars attached to each column.